

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 002503

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ON ALLEGED LIMITATIONS ON CONTACTS
AT EMBASSY

1. WASHINGTON POST JAN 5 CARRIES STORY BY DUSKO DODER
ENTITLED "US SAID TO CURB MOSCOW EMBASSY", WHICH ALLEGES
INTER ALIA THAT:

--THERE IS A "STATE DEPARTMENT RULE" REQUIRING AMERICAN
DIPLOMATS IN MOSCOW TO GET ADVANCE APPROVAL FROM THE US
AMBASSADOR FOR MEETINGS WITH ORDINARY SOVIET CITIZENS,

--MEMBERS OF US EMBASSY IN MOSCOW AND THEIR SPOUSES MUST
GIVE "TWENTY-FOUR HOUR NOTICE" OF INTENTIONS TO MEET
SOVIET CITIZENS,

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--"ONLY A FEW" ON EMBASSY STAFF ARE AUTHORIZED TO MEET WITH
DISSIDENTS OR JEWISH ACTIVISTS,

--THIS "POLICY" HAS RESULTED IN FEWER CONTACTS WITH UNOF-
FICIAL SOVIETS AND HAS REDUCED QUALITY AND VOLUME OF
INFORMATION FROM THESE SOURCES.

2. DODER HAD CALLED EUR/SOV JAN 3 TO CHECK OUT PARTS OF STORY HE SAID HE HAD GOTTEN FROM "OTHER SOURCES." AFTER CHECKING WITH AMBASSADOR TOON, WE TOLD HIM THAT AMBASSADOR FOLLOWS THESE MATTERS CLOSELY, THAT THERE WERE EMBASSY OPERATING PROCEDURES TO KEEP TRACK OF CONTACTS SO THAT OFFICERS COULD KEEP THEMSELVES INFORMED, THAT THE POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT AND THE EMBASSY WAS TO ENCOURAGE BROAD CONTACTS AND THAT SUCH CONTACTS WERE MORE EXTENSIVE THAN EVER, DESPITE SOVIET CLOSE OBSERVATION AND OCCASIONAL HARRASSMENT. SOME OF THIS APPEARED IN DODER STORY, BUT HE QUOTES OTHER SOURCES IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT EMBASSY PROCEDURES CONSTITUTE A NEW POLICY OF DISCOURAGING OUTSIDE CONTACTS SO AS NOT TO STRAIN US-SOVIET RELATIONS.

3. QUESTIONS ON THIS CAME UP IN DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING JAN 5. (FULL EXCERPTS FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.) ON GENERAL QUESTION SPOKESMAN SAID:

4. "IT IS SIMPLY INCORRECT TO SAY THAT CONTACTS HAVE BEEN LIMITED OR HAVE FALLEN OFF. IN FACT, THEY ARE MORE EXTENSIVE THAN EVER. THERE IS NO STATE DEPARTMENT RULE GOVERNING SUCH CONTACTS BY EMBASSY OFFICERS IN MOSCOW AS ALLEGED IN THE STORY. EACH AMBASSADOR ABROAD ESTABLISHES HIS EMBASSY'S PROCEDURES, AND AMBASSADOR TOON IN MOSCOW DOES FOLLOW THESE MATTERS CLOSELY. EMBASSY PRACTICES IN KEEP-CONFIDENTIAL

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ING TRACK OF SUCH CONTACTS ARE A MATTER OF OPERATING PROCEDURE DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT EMBASSY OFFICERS ARE FULLY INFORMED. THIS SERVES, FOR EXAMPLE, TO INCREASE OUR CONTACTS BY AVOIDING DUPLICATION OF EFFORT.

5. "SECOND, LET ME SAY OUR POLICY AND THAT OF THE EMBASSY IN MOSCOW IS TO ENCOURAGE MORE AND BROADER CONTACTS IN SOVIET SOCIETY, WHICH WE FEEL IS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE BETTER."

6. SPOKESMAN PROMISED ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS REGARDING ADVANCE APPROVAL PROCEDURES AND ALLEGED LIMITATION OF NUMBER OF EMBOFFS AUTHORIZED TO SEE DISSIDENTS AND SOVIET JEWS. AMBASSADOR TOON IS ON HIS WAY TO FLORIDA AND CANNOT BE REACHED. THEREFORE, REQUEST EMBASSY TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE BY IMMEDIATE CABLE TO REACH DEPARTMENT BY OPENING OF BUSINESS JANUARY 6 ON THESE TWO POINTS AS WELL AS ANY COMMENTS ON GENERAL QUESTION EMBASSY MAY WISH TO OFFER. CHRISTOPHER

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